DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 342 125 EA 023 749

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TITLE Although We Don't Know for Sure What It Is, Our Views of the Knowledge Base Are Far Too Limited.
PUB DATE Nov 91
NOTE 25p.; Revision of a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration (Auburn, AL, November 10-12, 1991).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Education; Cognitive Development; *Educational Administration; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Management Development; *Professional Development; *Research Utilization; *Theory Practice Relationship

ABSTRACT

Issues in the educational administration knowledge base are discussed in this paper, with attention to its definition, extent, and usefulness. The discussion is based on the premises that the knowledge base lacks: (1) organization; (2) definition and applicability; and (3) comprehensiveness and usefulness. Other hindrances to developing a comprehensive knowledge base include the fragmented organization of educational administration departments and poor research quality. A blend of quantitative and qualitative approaches is suggested as the method of inquiry for educational administration. It is concluded that educational administration programs should have a strong knowledge base, and that this knowledge base should consist of a triad of elements: content (what); context/delivery (how); and an ethical/moral dimension (why). One table and four figures are included. The appendix summarizes concerns about research and the knowledge base in educational administration. (45 references) (LMI)

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ALTHOUGH WE DON'T KNOW FOR SURE WHAT IT IS, OUR VIEWS OF THE KNOWLEDGE BASE ARE FAR TOO LIMITED

Revision of A Paper Presented at

Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration (SRCEA)

Annual Conference

Auburn, Alabama

11/10-11/12, 1991

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ALTHOUGH WE DON'T KNOW FOR SURE WHAT IT IS, OUR VIEWS OF THE KNOWLEDGE BASE ARE FAR TOO LIMITED[1]

Introduction

A discussion of the Education Administration (EA) knowledge base (KB) should try to clarify or focus the issue.. Which do we mean in our discussions of the EA KB? (Or do we mean both?)

I. The KB that practicing administrators should/must know to practice EA, and when they need to know it?
II. The KB that EA professors should/must know to profess?

Although this paper does not provide clear answers, it does raise the issue to the discussion level. The paper does argue that, for various reasons, 1) EA does not really have much of a KB, 2) even if there were an "EA KB," the public policy arena in which educators play pretty well denies that education administrators can/could use the KB, and 3) what KB there is, isn't considered in broad enough terms (especially for the professoriate) to be comprehensive, realistic or useful.[2]

Because it is my invidious nature (an idiographic element) to have just a mote of cussedness and playfulness, I'd like to raise some ideas for concerned, contemplative, colleagues to consider. They are questions. If we really do have an EA KB, the answers should flow easily and there should be high levels of agreement on the answers. A few sample questions that may guide the discussion are in Figure 1.

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[2] These points have been addressed previously, either in single-author or joint-author pieces. A separate listing is provided before the "formal" references. Thanks to people who have commented on and contributed to this and previous pieces, especially L. DuVall and John Hoyle. A slightly different version was presented 8/91 at NCPEA with the title "Knowledge Base or No Ledge: We Must Hang on to Something." An earlier version appeared in The Record in Educational Administration and Supervision, 12(1), Fall/Winter, 1991, 15-20.

Figure 1 about here

Certainly things are not as bad as this introduction would lead us to believe. One position in this paper could be "EA has no definite, agreed-upon KB." Some would agree with this, or at least would have a qualified agreement (e.g., Bok, 1987. See Appendix A). However, as I intend not to retire right now and professors must have something to profess (Willower), I've chosen the position expressed in the paper's title:

ALTHOUGH WE DON'T KNOW FOR SURE WHAT IT IS, OUR VIEWS OF THE KNOWLEDGE BASE ARE FAR TOO LIMITED AND LIMITING.

Besides the present rush to find, define and refine the KB and the confusion in "the field," there are three general areas that lead me to my conclusions. These three are addressed next, and then a very modest set of ideas is presented to suggest some ways out of the morass. . . .

EA Really Does Not Have Much of an Organized KB

That several people and groups are concerned about the EA KB is probably not a question of debate. For example, the 1991 University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) Conference considered the knowledge-base question. At its March, 1991 meeting in New Orleans, UCEA established a steering committee to address knowledge base and scholarship (". . . aimed at defining the knowledge base . . .a) . . . identify an appropriate knowledge base for educational administration. . . .") (UCEA, 1991). Some suggest that education, and that EA as a subset of education, lack a substantial knowledge base. At the National Conference of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA), the "Bigger Picture" Interest Group participants contemplated the EA knowledge base in 1990 (Achilles and DuVall, 1990 and 1991). In 1991 NCPEA continued the discussion with a presentation on two points of view about the EA KB (Achilles, 1991b; Hoyle, 1991). The present material extends 1991 NCPEA ideas.

Some have argued that one way to build a knowledge base is through research. Yet in our many believe that EA research is (to put it politely) "squishy." Outside the EA field, EA

1. In a discussion of the EA KB, do EA professors (folks like us) talk about some KB that. . .

   a) practicing administrators should have?
   b) graduates of their programs should have?
   c) is consensual across "the field"?
   d) EA professors should research?
   e) EA professors should profess?; should practice?
   f) is research based (or theory based, or practice based)?
   g) EA professors should have?
   h) others?

2. Whichever one they choose (a good discussion should have clarity of definition), do the discussants agree?

3. Without this kind, or some similar kind of agreement, what are we left with in our quest for or designation of the EA KB?

4. If there is a definitive EA KB (one must question if there is with all of the lists of competencies, domains, courses, etc. available. See also disagreements between practitioners/professors or complaints of practitioners about their programs that supposedly provided them the KB: (e.g., Pitner, 1982 and 1988; Brown, Markus, and Lucas, 1988) when should the Education Administrator have this KB? How much of it?

5. What EA KB should professors of EA profess to those who would be/are EA practitioners? [Willower (1983:184) believes that professors must profess something.]

6. What is the KB for EA professors (i.e., what KB should they practice to be EA professors)? [E.g., research? See Appendix A. The EA research was so weak that in 1991 AASA chose not to award two of the three annual AASA awards for EA research, including the one to professors. AASA?! (AASA, 1991)]

7. Building on the EA KB, just exactly how will the EA preparation program look? Will it have an internship (see Daresh and Playko, 1989)? Will it move from theory to practice? From practice to theory (Mouton and Blake, 1984)?

8. Would you find it difficult to design, define and evaluate an EA preparation program without pretty clear agreement on the content, context and delivery of the EA KB, and also without agreement upon a way to access, assess and advance the EA KB (discipline or field)?

Each EA professor could certainly conceive critical KB questions. Answers to these and other questions could lead to dilemmas.

If the EA professor's KB is the same as the EA practitioner's, what differentiates the professor role from the practitioner? If it is not the same, how can you teach someone something that he/she needs but you don't know?

Figure 1. Some Questions (A Pre-Test) About the Knowledge Base (KB).

research is often a source of derision -- if not contempt. There are stories of professors from "real" disciplines who will not serve on EA dissertations, and of EA professors who don't do research (e.g., see McCarthy, et al., 1988; Achilles, 1989b, 1990; Boyan, 1981; Erickson, 1979; Haller and Knapp, 1985, etc.). A summary of some criticism of EA, research in EA and the EA KB is in Appendix A -- a rehash of some well-known skeletons.

Some believe that the EA KB is theory based; that the study of theory and the seeking out of broad theoretic principles will provide a base to guide the practice of EA. Others believe that the EA KB is essentially grounded in practice. For example, the Silver Center for Reflective Principals at Hofstra University emphasized that an understanding of exemplary practice and of the problems of practice would provide some KB to move EA forward.

Is EA a normative field; that is, must we consider ethical and moral issues related to education and schooling? Are ethics, values, understandings of diversity, knowledge of social goals and visions of better social conditions for people part of the EA KB?

Business leaders and politicians often ask why education and EA are not more "business like." The economic sector, represented by business as a special interest group often drives education, and thus EA gains currency as people today relate politics, schools and the economy. People speak of the Information Age (an education domain). The "political/industrial complex" (Achilles, 1991a) seeks to govern and direct education as this arena offers the chance of big future profits. (Note Chubb and Moe, 1990; Drucker, 1989; Toffler, 1990; etc.) Some business leaders would have EA use business ideas to improve education. Is business the KB? Can EA mindlessly apply business' principles to education when the two institutions have vastly different goals? (Business deals in dollars; Education deals in sense.)

Is the EA KB simply knowing and doing what policy-makers, power brokers, interest groups and the public request or demand?

A portion of the knowledge base may depend on what people desire from schools. What do people as represented by a board of education seek the schools to do? Sometimes interest groups

or the general public establish goals for education. (The President's six "goals" in America 2000 are an example; here, however, ends and means seem blurred.)

The idea that a KB may be built from research, practice, theory, ethics, public desires and other ways is shown in Table 1. If the EA KB emerges from these sources, how much of it is vital for new administrators, for advanced practitioners, or for those who just want to know about EA, but not practice it?

Table 1 about here

Is EA a discipline or a profession of practice -- or an art, science, craft, or combination? If EA is a discipline, it must meet the criteria for a discipline. A discipline typically seeks to answer "What" and "Why" questions related to that field. A discipline consists at a minimum of a KB and also of a method of inquiry to assess, access and to advance that KB. If we apply this definition, is EA a discipline?

If EA is a profession of practice, EA practitioners must practice something. Whatever they practice should reflect some knowledge base. A profession of practice builds on one or more disciplines that provide the underlying KB to be applied. Professionals deal with human questions and seek to answer the "What," "How," and "Why" questions (Achilles, 1986; 1988; 1991a). Is EA a profession of practice (one that deals with human problems)? Profession is distinct from a discipline or a craft on several dimensions or concepts, including the questions that each considers, the focus, etc. (Figure 2). These concepts of discipline, profession and craft can be considered in terms of the content, context, delivery/structure both of preparation and of the provision of EA services. (We'll return to this idea.)

Figure 2 about here

Table 1. Matrix of elements of knowledge base needed by persons at various levels of performance and the source of the knowledge.

ELEMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE BASE NEEDED BY PERSONS. . . .

Source of Knowledge Base	Performing at Entry Level	Performing at Advanced Level	Seeking Certification but not to Practice
Research (Access/Assess and Advance)			
Canons of Practice (Craft)			
Theory			
Normative and Ethical Issues			
"Political Correctness"			
Etc.			

TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE IN VARIOUS OCCUPATIONS

FOCUS:		Objects	Human Problems	Natural/Social Phenomena		
QUERY:		How?	What?			
		What?	Why?	What?		
			How?	Why?		
	C					A
	O					B
	N					S
	C	CRAFTS	PROFESSIONS	DISCIPLINES		T
	R					R
	E					A
	T					C
	E					T
KNOW-		Techniques	Typologies of Problems	Laws		
LEDGE:		Methods	Principles of Practice	Theories		
		Coordination	Exemplary Practices	Propositions		
		Dexterity	Standardized Practices	Postulates		
		Procedures	Consensually Validated Procedures	Taxonomies Models		

P. Silver:1985

Figure 2. Types of knowledge in various fields: crafts, disciplines and professions. This model may help in explaining Education Administration as a discipline or as a profession of practice.

In simple form, a discipline focuses on what (content); a craft on how and a profession upon those two plus the beneficial application of the content (why). A professional knows what to do, how to do it, and why it should be done. This suggests that consideration of a KB as content is much too simple; delivery and context/setting are also important.

Even if There Were an EA KB, We'd have Trouble Defining It; We Don't Use It and the Public Policy Arena Discourages Use of It.

Glickman (1991) points out that we know much more than we use. In essence, he suggests that we have a knowledge base but don't use it. Glickman notes that research clearly shows, among other things, that 1) tracking does not help students, 2) retention (in grade) does not help students, 3) corporal punishment does not help students, 4) students learn from real activities (anchored instruction or situation cognition a la Prestine and LeGrand, 1990), 5) effective teaching is not a set of generic practice, but instead is a set of context-driven decisions about teaching, 6) there is nothing inherently sacred about Carnegie units, classroom size and grade levels, 7) outstanding teachers do not teach for external incentives but for internal ones (Herzberg?), 8) teacher evaluation (as practiced) does not relate to school-wide improvement, 9) the principal of a successful school is not the instructional leader, but the coordinator of teachers as instructional leaders, 10) successful schools don't work off prescriptive lists; they work off professional judgments, 11) the measure of school worth is not how students score on standardized tests (where half must be below average) but rather the learning that they can display in authentic. . .settings (pp. 4-8).

To this I would add such things as incentives and motivation and the futility of "no pass/no play" rules, mandates handed down by policy groups, but not based upon what educators know about learning and motivation. These mandates often help provide results counter to the goals of schooling. For example, stricter "standards" and "no pass/no play" may result in increased dropouts (a real problem). Sadly, however, educators don't fight strenuously against these politically-correct but educationally-wrong initiatives. The political/industrial complex has

enough media "clout" and funding to advance counterproductive initiatives and educators follow along. Why? Is it because there is no strong KB which will refute the follies?

Glickman (p. 8) says that we must confront our knowledge and use it. DO WE REALLY HAVE A KNOWLEDGE BASE IF WE HAVE KNOWLEDGE BUT DON'T USE IT TO BENEFIT CLIENTS? OR WORSE YET, IF WE WITHHOLD WHAT WE KNOW WOULD BENEFIT CLIENTS?[3]

Finally, EA professors and practitioners need to think BIG. If they get the questions and foci established, admit that the KB needs help, agree that until now there has been disdain for the EA KB and that the political arena has helped deter EA persons from using what KB there is (one may need to apply the test of cui bono -- who benefits -- to understand the reluctance to make changes), then the definition of the KB will include more than the traditional "content." What KB There Is, Isn't Considered in Broad Enough Terms (Especially for the Professoriate) to be Comprehensive, Realistic or Useful.

Traditionally, the EA KB has been considered only in terms of content -- content of preparation programs, content that practitioners should know, content that a professor should have and dispense. This view is truncated and shortsighted. The KB view should consider content and such things as: research as a way to access, assess and advance the KB; context; structure; delivery and other elements that really are a part of the EA realm. This section will review a few ideas, but the area is open for critique, review and expansion.

One task of research is to build and extend the KB. How does a KB grow? Do we build it, or must it be "reinvented"? In the 1990's we hear much about a great "push" for school/business collaboration and this is viewed as "new." In 1990 I read nine articles by 13 authors on the new idea of education cooperation (Achilles, 1990). An extensive 1971 study analyzed various forms of educational cooperation such as school study councils (which originated at Harvard and Columbia about 1954), regionalism, boards of cooperative educational services, regional

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[3] This section could be much longer. For additional ideas, see Achilles, 1991a; Finn, 1989; Schneider, 1991; etc.

instructional material centers, etc. One major chapter in this comprehensive study dealt with business and education cooperation (Hughes, et al., 1971). This 1971 work is not cited or used as a base for improving the "new" idea of cooperation. WHERE IS THE KNOWLEDGE BASE?

The National Alliance of Businessmen (NAB) headed by Henry Ford II "is enlisting local businessmen in the attack on what is being described as one of America's biggest problems" (USN&WR, 1968, p. 61). They found that it cost two or three times more to provide job training for someone from the "hard core" unemployed as for a normal worker (p. 62). Strange? Sound familiar? That was 1968! WHERE IS THE KNOWLEDGE BASE?

Lehman (1991) castigated recent authors for not knowing what exists (the knowledge base?) when they "reinvented" ideas with long histories of success (in this case, alternative schools). In a rush to start something -- or to jump on a bandwagon -- do we abandon building a knowledge base? IF THOSE WHO ADVOCATE "NEW" THINGS DO NOT BUILD ON WHAT IS KNOWN (THE KB?), WHO WILL? DOES EA HAVE A KB IF THE CLUTCH IS ALWAYS SLIPPING AND THE FIELD GOES NOWHERE?

Hoyle (1991) likens administration to his pear tree. The agriculture metaphor is probably optimistic; agriculture has moved forward while education seems to mark time, slip its clutch, or ride on a merry-go-round. Hoyle (1991, p. 109) notes:

> . . .this writer believes that Domain III, Interpersonal Domains, is the most important. Scott Thomson (1990b) seems to agree about the importance of the Domain when he said that . . . Principals require strong interpersonal and operational skills to be successful for their schools. (p. 2)

This suggests another way to build a KB -- informed professional judgment (IPJ) and consensus. Can we get consensus between practitioners and researchers/scholars? THIS PROVIDES AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF A RESEARCH NEED. If EA had an appropriate method of inquiry (rather than always trying to follow the "scientific" model or the quantitative method used in some other fields), EA might see the convergence of research, IPJ, and practice to provide a piece of the KB. Without careful building, we'll have only ad hominem evidence

("Hoyle says") and worse, use of material as "truth" without testing. (See Culbertson's comments in Appendix A.)

Not until the Handbook of Research in Educational Administration (Boyan, 1988) was there a compilation of some KB in EA. There have been textbooks, papers and movements or themes, but little has been done to codify a definitive KB and one which most practitioners and professors could agree upon. But, if as some say, EA is a field of practice, where is the parallel Handbook of Practice in Educational Administration? The KB is still incomplete. Does The Handbook (Boyan, 1988) tell how to administer education? Does it contain research on administration as defined by Haller and Knapp (1985)?

Since EA practitioners need to know What, How, and Why, EA's method of inquiry must be expanded. Rather than emulating the "Discipline" model for inquiry, EA should use a profession's mode of inquiry. This may be a combination of quantitative and qualitative modes -- QUALIQUANTITIATIVE. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3 about here

Other Hindrances to a Knowledge Base.

One reason why any knowledge base for EA is tenuous is the very organization of EA. Preparation programs are typically in EA departments that contain area specialists who work in small areas of interest, not moving the sub-fields much forward, because there is no "critical mass" of colleagues to get and keep a sustained research thrust going. Further, research in the field is suspect (see Appendix A). Hindrances include, among other things:

-Professors typically don't do research or do much research (e.g., Bridges, Erickson, Haller and Knapp, McCarthy, et al.)

-Research in EA does not build in an incremental way (Bridges).

-Research in EA tends to be shoddy and slip-shod (many sources).

-Lack of a common language (Achilles, 1989).

MAJOR QUESTION	PRIMARY INQUIRY MODE
WHAT? (SCIENCE)	**QUANTITATIVE**
HOW? (HOW WELL?) (CRAFT)	**QUALITATIVE**
WHY? (ART)	**QUALITATIVE** - CONTEMPLATIVE - REFLECTIVE - ETHICAL/MORAL

Education Administration deals with all 3 areas so the Ed Admin method of inquiry is

QUALIQUANTITATIVE

Figure 3. Description of why the method of inquiry for EA should be a combination of both quantitative and qualitative forms.

-Weak preparation programs (NCEEA, NPB, Danforth Initiatives).

SOME HEARTENING THINGS

EA is not in this alone. In many fields those "in the real world" decry their preparation programs. Practitioners of such fields as medicine, dentistry and law say that their programs didn't really focus on what they do on the job (Pitner, 1988). To the extent that these other fields are successful and considered "professions," EA professors should take heart, for we, too, are criticized (perhaps even more than other fields) by our graduates, the practitioners. Preparation-program faculty constantly are defending "the Ivory Tower" from "the Real World," but this may relate to the lack of distinction in what is the EA KB (see page 1).

Consider the potential for assessing the KB as defined in preparation programs against the reality of practice. Could professors "anchor" or tie the EA KB as taught at the university to the practice of operating schools? (Do we teach what practitioners need?)

There have been some steps to define a KB. Two with a specific focus on the superintendent (note the publication dates), are Hoyle et al. (1990 draft) and Carter et al. (1991-92). What about the KB for other EA roles? The 1990 NCPEA session produced some consensus on what might be a KB for EA. There was no determination about the role-specific nature of these ideas (Achilles and DuVall, 1990, p. 6; 1991, p. 17)

Some Consensual Knowledge-Base Elements

A. Pure Knowledge and/or Theory
   - Planning and Evaluation
   - Human Growth and Development
   - Schools and Schooling: Purpose and Roles
   - Finance, Motivation Systems
   - Research/Inquiry Results
   - Human Relations Skills (Understanding People)
   - Understanding Organizations

B. Canons of Practice
   - "Localized" practice (Engineer and apply ideas from A above)
   - How to Make Decisions
   - Problem Solving
   - "Grounded" Theory, perhaps from "reflecting on practice" and then using successful results
   - Understanding the social construction of knowledge

C. Other (or a combination of A+B)
   Belief System (Values); Self-Understanding
   Presupposed Knowledge Base from Teaching
   Administration is more Process than Content
   Administering Education Requires Breadth (not a parochial approach)
   Understanding and Using Various Modes of Inquiry

One encouraging step is the push for using a wider array of methods of inquiry than the field embraced when the theory movement was in full bloom. A blend of quantitative and qualitative approaches may provide a distinctive EA method of inquiry to move the field forward. New information storage and retrieval systems will help us develop ways to store and access information. ERIC may not the THE best approach, but it beats a file drawer full of papers. Integrative literature reviews, selective dissemination of information, and study of prior trends may help in defining a knowledge base.

EA professors dearly need a KB, for without one, what do professors profess (Willower, 1983, p. 184)? While practitioners may get by with some artful applications of craft knowledge, preparation-program personnel need knowledge from theory and practice (as well as from reflective efforts) to build course content. Their research must extend this base to help construct a knowledge base that expert practitioners can use for client benefit.

If we can agree on a KB, then we can strengthen the content of EA preparation programs (we'll still need to address delivery and context). The KB not only will help us determine what to teach, but it will serve as a way to organize research ideas and help us revitalize preparation programs. Figure 4 provides one idea of these relationships.

Figure 4 about here

If the KB (content) were important and consistent across preparation programs, we should easily be able to explain why one EA department is improving, another is excellent and a third is in decline simply by looking at course syllabi. However, program delivery and those who do the delivery are as much a part of the KB as is the content.

Clearly, the EA knowledge base is not just content and the ways to build and assess content. Perhaps we have been too simplistic in our pursuit of trying to categorize the KB into domains or competencies (almost all EA groups have one or more of these lists). The KB includes a triad of elements: content (what), context/delivery (how) and an ethical/moral dimension (why).

Perhaps when EA develops a KB, people will gain confidence in those who practice EA, and allow them to use what they already know as a way to move education forward. For example, we know some of the problems with grouping and tracking, and with retaining students in grade. It's conceivable (certainly we can hope) that in the future EA practitioners will be able to convince the public that education can be successful by applying what educators know. But this all implies a KB. Where is it? What is it? Who has it? Do we have the tools to build and assess it? If so, let's get on with it. Now!

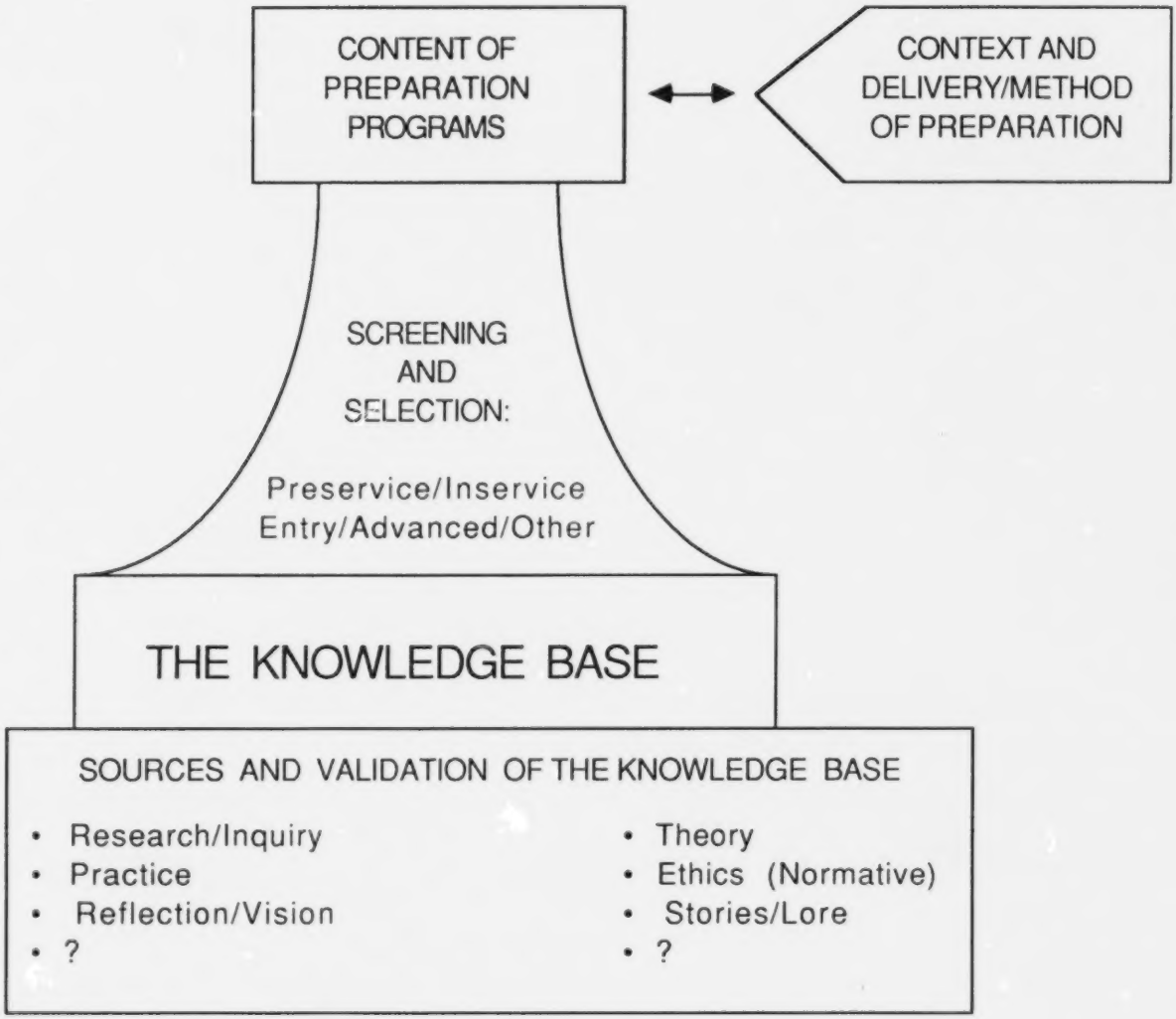

Figure 4. Structure of Preparation in Relation to the Knowledge Base.

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And, lest we forget, such items as the competencies developed by other groups, or the NASSP "twelve points" for assessment, etc. Many groups have their own competency lists.

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APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF SOME CONCERNS ABOUT RESEARCH AND
"THE KNOWLEDGE BASE" IN EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION*

"The preparation of professional educational administrators is one of the weakest components of United States' education." (Guthrie, 1990, p. 228-229)

"Most programs for training school administrators range in quality from embarrassing to disastrous." (Griffiths, 1988, p. 6)

"Over the past quarter of a century pre-service preparation programs for educational administration have proliferated, but their quality has deteriorated" (NPB, 1989, p. 9), and "course content is often irrelevant, outdated and unchallenging" (p. 11).

INTRODUCTION

Some "Down-Side" Issues

It might be easier to accept or shrug off such criticisms if they were from commissions of people outside education administration (EA). Unfortunately, they aren't; they are from leaders in the field. They are not alone -- theirs are not plaintive cries in the wilderness. These are general, broad-brush criticisms. . . What about the area that EA professors have quite direct control of -- research and inquiry? Here, surely, things are in better shape. Not really. Some have been concerned about the method and focus of research in the field of EA. [Note, for example, Boyan (1981, 1988), Bridges (1982), Erickson, (1979), Haller (1979), Haller and Knapp (1985), McCarthy, et al. (1988), Murphy, et al. (1983)].

> There is a long record of criticism regarding research in educational administration. It generally is viewed as being of low utility to practitioners, poorly conducted and based in an inappropriate methodological paradigm. There is no need here to repeat these oft-cited and quite valid criticisms (Guthrie, 1989, p. 229. Guthrie relies also on R. Muth's paper at UCEA, Cincinnati, 1988 titled "Reconceptualizing Training for Administrators and Leaders: Focus on Inquiry").

There have been and continue to be many papers and reports that address the content (or the suggested content) of education administrator (EA) preparation programs (The Knowledge Base). Some address the content issue directly by specifying areas of study [e.g., the National Policy Board, or NPB (1989) recommendations of: "societal and cultural influences on schooling, teaching and learning processes and school improvement, organizational theory, methodologies of organizational studies and policy analysis, leadership and management processes and functions, policy studies and politics of education, moral and ethical dimensions of schooling" (p. 19)]; others address the content issue indirectly by specifying competencies or skills that an administrator should possess (e.g., the Assessment Center idea. See also Hoyle, et al., 1990). Content is notoriously slow to change, research results take considerable time to have much impact (if they have an impact), and ideas offered as "research" often are not really as research-based as some would believe. Culbertson (1990) addressed this problem.

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> First, borrowed concepts tend to enter textbooks before they are adequately tested in school systems. The result is that such concepts may be used indefinitely in training programs even though their actual relations to school management and leadership practices remain unknown. (pp. 102-103. Emphasis added.)

Considerable work remains to be done to specify the knowledge base for education administration. Achilles and DuVall (1990, pp. 1-2) reviewed some criticisms of EA's knowledge base by citing some vocal critics:

> Daresh and Playko (1989) pondered the knowledge base and its relationship to mentoring. They concluded that maybe we couldn't use mentors in education administration, for they don't really have anything substantive to show to their proteges and protegees. 'The research base on administration is not clear enough to guide mentoring relationship' (p. 90). 'When there is little evidence of what good administrators ought to do, a handicap exists for those who might guide their colleague's practices' (p. 90).
>
> The knowledge base in education and education administration has been cussed, discussed and derided. Demerell (1985) called the absence of a body of its own knowledge 'Education's Smoking Gun.' The general low estate of education departments and faculties on major campuses seems to derive, at least in part, from educators' inability to define their own body of knowledge and specific methods of inquiry (Judge, 1982; Guthrie and Clifford, 1989). Derek Bok, President of Harvard, spoke to education's lack of a knowledge base of its own. To the extent that it is part of education, Bok's (1987) comments include education administration: 'Because they have neither a strong profession nor a distinctive body of knowledge to impart, education faculties have no firm anchor for their programs or curricula. Instead, external forces push them first in one direction, and then in another' (p. 46. Emphasis added).

At least three areas -- research in EA, program content and the knowledge base -- seem still unsettled as we consider developing new EA preparation programs. Even if there are changes or agreements in these three areas, can we expect EA preparation to change dramatically, as some have suggested is needed? Probably not. Content is but part of the program. A second and equally important element is the delivery/context of preparation.

A "professional model," however, also includes not only an appropriate delivery/method, but also an understanding of knowledge's relationship to the field as a part of context. Achilles and DuVall (1990) commented on this issue:

> If we aspire to the professional model, then the education administration knowledge base should be at least partly based on practice (grounded theory). We assert:
>
> 1. The knowledge base in other professions resides in the practice thereof.
>
>   a. In medicine, the knowledge includes not only pathology, pharmacology, and anatomy, but also the interface between the sciences and the patient.
>   b. In architecture, it is built not only on design and engineering, but also the interface of the sciences and the human being.
>   c. This "human" and practice condition exists similarly in other professions.
>
> 2. Only in "pure sciences" such as theoretical physics, metallurgy, nuclear chemistry, etc. is the human factor secondary. But even here the impact on humans is increasingly important.

A knowledge base for a profession stands on at least four legs. One leg is the basic, theoretical underpinnings that relate concepts and ideas, help predict behaviors, and at least practically explain phenomena.

Another leg is performance and practice. The application of concepts requires the processing of real-time feedback. It requires continuous adjustment, assessment of phenomena, and alteration of courses of action. Performance requires the practitioner to be a "scholar on one's feet." This type of knowledge cannot be acquired in the classroom; it requires a live setting with alive people. It includes a set of skills as well as abstract knowledge. We need to address this with a classic skill-building approach. Note the analogy to the pianist and the piano. One can study music history, style, interpretation, harmony, but until one develops enough skill at the keyboard, the knowledge will not be evident (p. 3).